Montana's Distance Learning Policy for Adult Basic and Literacy Education

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Montana
Office of Public Instruction
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opi.mt.gov

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I. INTRODUCTION

This policy is intended to define distance learning delivery for all Montana ABLE programs that integrate distance learning into their Adult Basic and Literacy Programs. The goal of this document is to provide guidelines by which programs can report adult learners' distance education hours to the National Reporting System (NRS) using the state approved data management system (MABLE).

A. The Need

Montana began using distance learning in the 2007-2008 Program Year. In our increasingly technological world, distance learning has provided our state with another means to assist learner's successful achievement gains and increase our program outcomes. The vastness of Montana often prevents those most in need of literacy services from accessing ABLE programs. Of the 56 counties in the state, 18 offer ABLE services, leaving 38 counties with no ABLE services. Distance education provides a viable option for instruction and a way to recruit a large population of students that previously may not have had access to ABLE services.

Distance education is a reality within all educational platforms, from K-12 systems, to higher education institutes, and also adult education programs. By developing information and communication technology (ICT) within the classroom and through the various modes of distance learning, ABLE programs are increasing educational access and providing options for adult learners. These options allow flexibility and offer a multitude of instructional strategies that will enhance educational gains, engage 21st century learning skills, promote workforce development, and improve the state's adult basic literacy outcomes.

B. Going to Scale

All ABLE Programs in the state of Montana can offer distance learning as a means of instruction. Distance learning provides students the opportunity to engage in instruction during hours when ABLE programs are not open and provides students in communities without ABLE programs access to instruction. The purpose of this policy is to provide standardization for programs who offer distance learning.

Programs that wish to offer distance learning will have the opportunity to contact the state ABLE director, participate in all statewide required trainings, use state approved curriculum, and manage distance learning according to state policy and NRS guidelines. Distance learning will be a voluntary delivery option, as ABLE programs must be willing to incur increased costs as well as maintain traditional classroom instruction.

Information and technical assistance for local program distance learning implementation is available by contacting the state office or the state's distance learning coordinator:

Margaret Bowles
State Director Adult Basic and Literacy
Education
(406) 444-4443

Carol Flynn
Distance Learning Contact
(406) 444-1691

Office of Public Instruction
PO Box 202501
Helena, MT 50620-2501
Fax: (406) 444-1373

II. DEFINITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Distance Education Defined

The federal office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) defines distance education for adult basic education programs as follows:

Distance education is a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both, for the majority of the instructional period.* Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to: print, audio, recording, videotape, television broadcasts, computer software, web-based interaction, and other online technologies. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail, or other web-based technologies or software

* Completion of instructional activities in a computer lab for traditional classes does not qualify as distance education.

B. Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) Learners Defined

ABLE learners are identified in three ways:

Traditional Learners *are* students who receive the majority of their instruction through traditional, face-to-face instruction.

Distance Learners *are* students who receive the majority of their instruction (51% or greater) through state approved distance education services.

Blended Learners *are* students who receive a majority of their instruction through traditional face-to-face instruction and also participate in distance education activities. For NRS reporting purposes, blended learners are usually classified and reported as traditional learners. However, at the end of a program year, if a student's attendance hours are logged as 51% or higher in distance education then the student will be classified as a distance learner.

All programs will keep track of student time in the Montana Student Information System (MABLE). Attendance hours will be entered in MABLE for distance learning classes and traditional classroom settings. Students will be classified as either a traditional learner or a distance learner depending on where the majority of the student's time was spent (51 % or greater) during the program year.

C. Approved Distance Education Hours

All students must have at least 12 hours of contact with an ABLE program before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. There are two types of student hours that may be counted: *contact hours* and *proxy hours.*

Contact Hours: are defined as time spent interacting with the learner. Contact hours for distance education students can be a combination of direct contact and distance activities such as face-to-face contact and contact by telephone, video, teleconference, or other online communication where identity of the learner can be verified. Face-to-face interaction includes student intake, orientation, assessment, goal-setting, advising, and classroom based skills training.

Proxy Hours: are defined as the time distance education students spend engaged in state approved distance education activities. The hours are calculated using one of three approved distance learning models of instruction - the model used in Montana ABLE programs will vary depending upon the approved curricula:

- *Clock Time Model:* assigns contact hours based on time that a learner is engaged in a software program that tracks time.

- *Teacher Verification Model:* assigns a fixed number of hours based on teacher determination of the extent to which a learner engaged in, or completed, the assignment.

- *Learner Mastery Model:* assigns a fixed number of hours based on the learner passing a test on the content of the lesson.

While using proxy hours, it is important to understand that the identity of the learner and the exact time spent on a learning activity cannot always be verified directly. Proxy hours are an approximation of what the "average" student needs in order to reach a mastery level.

D. Approved Distance Education Curricula

Montana recognizes a variety of sources as distance learning curricula.

See **Appendix A** for a complete list of current state approved distance education curricula and their respective, approved proxy-hour models. The state will approve additional curricula based on investigation and data analysis and as new distance education materials become available. If additional curriculum is approved Appendix A will be updated.

Each ABLE program that utilizes Missouri GED online or Skills Tutor seats purchased by the State ABLE grant must:

- *Maintain communication with state staff via e-mail or telephone if challenges arise with distance learning software.*

    - *On the first Monday of each month send an e-mail to the distance learning contact with the following information: names of students who need to be removed from Missouri GED online, and names of students that your programs has removed from Skills Tutor.*

Programs wishing to use or develop curricula and/or materials not identified in Appendix A, must submit a request to the state agency and the request must be approved before proxy hours can be reported for students using the proposed new distance education curricula.

III. ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

A. Assessing Distance Education Learners

All Montana ABLE sites utilize the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess its learners. Administration for the TABE is required to be on-site, face-to-face and in a proctored environment. The TABE assessment tool must be administered in person by an individual certified by TABE. All students must be pretested prior to 12 hours of instruction. Distance Education students are subject to the same post-test instructional hour intervals as traditional learners which is upon completion of 30-60 hours of instruction, depending on the student's EFL at entry.

B. Reporting Distance Education Learners

All programs must report all required NRS data in the state approved MABLE system to include both distance and classroom instruction. All students must have at least 12 hours of contact with an ABLE program before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. Instructors will count and record both direct contact hours and proxy hours into MABLE. Contact hours and proxy hours are recorded separately. At the end of each program year, MABLE will classify students as either a distance learner or a traditional learner, depending on where the majority of their time (51 % or more) was spent.

Under NRS reporting requirements, students in distance education will be reported in Table 4C (**Appendix B**) and Table 5A (**Appendix B**). These tables demonstrate the program's performance each fiscal year specific to distance education activities.

- **Table 4C** reports educational gains and attendance for distance learners. This table is identical to Table 4 with the exception that only students identified as distance education learners will be reported. No traditional students will be reported on this table.
- **Table 5A** reports follow-up outcomes on distance learners. This table is identical to Table 5 with the exception that only students identified as distance education learners will be reported. No traditional students will be reported on this table.

IV. APPLICATION, APPROVAL and TRAINING PROCESS
To OPERATE A DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

Montana will allow ABLE programs the option of implementing a distance learning program at their centers in addition to maintaining the traditional classroom setting. Each ABLE program interested in offering a distance learning program will follow these procedures:

- Send the program director and any staff members directly involved to a distance learning professional development training offered by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI).
- Select one individual to become the lead distance learning instructor for the center. This individual must be able to perform a variety of duties, as described in the ABLE Distance Learning Protocol Guide
- Complete the activities as a team (program director, lead instructor and other identified distance learning staff) in order to understand the process of distance learning.
- Maintain communication with state staff via email or telephone if challenges arise with Web-based programs that the state provides funding for.
- Develop a yearly distance learning continuous improvement plan to include; assessment of student's successes, and intended goals to increase the number of distance learners served.
- Provide student intake, assessment, and goal setting activities on-site, face-to-face.

V. FUNDING FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

A. State Contribution
No additional funding will be provided. A reallocation of existing resources may be necessary. Programs that implement distance learning have the potential to increase their total students served and receive additional state monies accordingly. Programs may receive reimbursements to cover the cost of travel to the required distance learning training sessions.

B. Program Contribution
Programs that wish to implement distance learning must adhere to the Montana Distance Learning Assessment Policy and Protocol Guidelines. Programs may need to fund additional time and resources to implement distance education. Adjusting budgets accordingly during the first year of implementation is advised.

APPENDIX A

The state of Montana has approved the following curricula for distance learning

Curriculum	MABLE Class Name	Model	Delivery Mode/Criteria for Awarding PCH	Description/PCH Credit	Publisher/Developer Information
GradPoint/ Nova Net	GradPoint/ Nova Net	Clock Time Model	Web-based program offered through the internet where the system keeps track of time and logs students out after preset period of inactivity	Students log in with their assigned passwords, the software program tracks their time which is recorded into MABLE	Pearson Learning 3075 W. Ray Road Suite 200 Chandler, AZ 85226 888-827-0772 http://www.pearsonschool.com
PLATO	PLATO-PLATO	Clock Time Model	Web-based program offered through the internet where the system keeps track of time and logs students out after preset period of inactivity	Students log in with their assigned passwords, the software program tracks their time which is recorded into MABLE	PLATO Learning 5600 West 83rd St, Suite 300, 8200 Tower Bloomington, MN 55437 800-427- 5286 http://www.plato.com
Skills Tutor	SKILLSTUTOR -Skills Tutor	Clock Time Model	Web-based program offered through the internet where the system keeps track of time and logs students out after preset period of inactivity	Students log in with their assigned passwords, the software program tracks their time which is recorded into MABLE	Houghton Mifllin Harcourt 181 Ballardvale St Wilmington, MA 01887 877-219-1537 http://www.skillstutor.com
GED Connections	GEDCONN-Ged Connections	Teacher Verification	Video: student self-report to teacher Workbook: teacher determines % of work completed Internet Activities: teacher determines work completed Modules: teacher validates w/questioning whether student has engaged Practice Tests: online and print based	Video = .5 hours Workbook = greater than 75% of activities completed = 4 hours 50-74% = 2 hours Internet Activities = 1 hour per activity (total possible 43 hours) Modules = 3 hours per module Practice Tests = 1 hour per test	Kentucky Educational Television, Enterprise Division 560 Cooper Drive Lexington, KY 40502 800-354-9067 http://www.ketadultlearning.org
Missouri GED Online	GEDONLINE-Ged online	Teacher Verification/ Learner Mastery	Web-based program offered through the internet where students demonstrate on a quiz that they have mastered the instructional content.	A fixed number of hours have been identified for each assignment based on teacher verification (*complete list available on page 9*). Proxy hours are assigned once students have demonstrated on a quiz that they have mastered the instructional content at 75 percent or higher. The actual assignment of proxy contact hours varies by instructional unit *(see chart on page 9 below)*. Proxy hours are an approximation of what the "average" student needs to reach a mastery level.	Rockwood School District 500 North Central Eureka, MO 63025 636-733-2161
NorthStar Learning	NorthStar Learning Language NorthStar Learning Math	Clock Time Model	Web-based program offered through the internet where the system keeps track of time and logs students out after a preset period of inactivity	Students log in with their assigned passwords, the software program tracks their time which is recorded into MABLE	Edmentem NW 7504 P.O. Box 1450 Minneapolis, MN 55485-7504 www.edmentem.com

Time Approved for Each Missouri GED Online Assignment

LA, Reading &Writing Units

Interpreting What You Read	1.5
Interpreting Info from Graphs	1.5
Punctuation	1.75
Capitalization	1.0
Pronouns	1.5
Modifiers	1.5
Verbs	1.5
Subject – Verb Agreement	1.75
Poetry	1.5
Sentence Structure	1.5
Writing Clear Sentences	1.5
Paragraph Organization	1.5
Writing an Essay	1.5

Social Studies Units

Social Studies Assessment	1.25
U.S. History	1.25
Geography	1.0
Political Cartoons	1.25
Additional Work 1 Hour	1.0
Additional Work 1.5 Hours	1.5
Additional Work 2.0 Hours	2.0

Science Units

Science Assessment	1.25
Special Topics	2.0
Earth Science	2.0
Life Science	2.0
Chemistry	2.92

Math Units

Whole Number Word Problems	1.0	Ratio and Proportions	1.5
Intro to Decimals	2.17	Percents	2.0
Decimals	2.0	Percent Word Problems	1.5
Decimal Word Problem	1.23	Integers	1.14
Intro to Fractions	2.5	Integer Word Problems	.8
Adding and Subtracting Fractions	1.5	Pre-Algebra	3.0
Multiplying and Dividing Fractions	1.5	Algebraic Equations	2.37
Fraction Word Problems	1.5	Algebra Word Problems	2.8
Estimating and Rounding	2.0	Geometry I	2.15
		Geometry II	2.09

APPENDIX B

Table 4C

Educational Gains and
Attendance for Participants in
Distance Education

Enter number of distance education participants for each category listed, calculate percentage of participants completing each level, and enter total proxy and direct attendance hours.

Entering Educational Functioning Level (A)	Total Number Enrolled In Distance Education (B)	Total Estimated and Actual Attendance Hours (C)	Number Completed Level (D)	Number who Completed a Level and Advanced One or More Levels (E)	Number Separated Before Completed (F)	Number Remaining Within Level (G)	Percentage Completing Level (H)
ABE Beginning							
ABE Beginning							
ABE							
ABE							
ASE Low							
ASE High*							
ESL Beginning							
ESL Low							
ESL High							
ESL							
ESL							
ESL Advanced							
Total							

Include in this table only students who are counted as distance education students.

Column D is the total number of learners who completed a level, including learners who left after completing and learners who remained enrolled and moved to one or more higher levels.
Column E represents a subset of Column D (Number Completed Level) and is learners who completed a level and enrolled in one or more higher levels.
Column F is students who left the program or received no services for 90 consecutive days and have no scheduled services.
Column D + F + G should equal the total in Column B.
Column G represents the number of learners still enrolled who are at the same educational level as when they entered.

Each row total in Column H is calculated using the following formula: $H = \dfrac{Column D}{Column B}$

Work-based project learners are not included in this table
.*Completion of ASE high level is attainment of a secondary credential or passing
GED tests. OMB Number xxxx-xxxx, Expires xx/xx/xx

Table 5A (for Program Year 2011)
Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement for Participants in
Distance Education

Core Follow-up Outcome Measures	Number of Participants With Goal	Number of Participants Included in Survey Sample	Number of Participants Responding to Survey or Used for Data	Response Rate or Percent Available for Match	Number of Participants Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
Entered Employment						
Retained Employment**						
Obtained a GED or Secondary School Diploma***						
Entered Postsecondary Education or Training****						

Include in this table only students who are counted as distance education students.

Follow the same instructions for Completing Table 5 to complete Table 5a, repeated below.

* Report in Column B the number of participants who were unemployed at entry and who had a goal of obtaining employment and who exited during the program year. Do not exclude students because of missing Social Security numbers or other missing data.

** Report in Column B: (1) the number of participants who were unemployed at entry and who had a goal of employment who exited and who entered employment by the end of the first quarter after program exit and (2) the number of participants employed at entry who had a goal of improved or retained employment who exited during the program year.

*** Report in Column B the number of participants with a goal of passing GED tests or obtaining a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who exited during the program year.

**** Report in Column B the number of participants with a goal of placement in postsecondary education or training who exited during the program year.

If survey is used, then the number in Column C should equal the number in Column B unless random sampling was used. If one or more local programs used random sampling, then enter in Column C the total number of students included in the survey. If data matching is used, then Column C should be left blank.

If survey is used, then the number in Column D should be less than Column C, unless there was a 100- percent response rate to the survey. If data matching is used, then the number reported in Column D should be the total number of records available for the data match. That number is normally less than the number in Column B. (If the numbers in these two columns are equal, then it means that all Social Security numbers are valid and that there are no missing Social Security numbers.)

$Column\ E = \frac{Column\ D}{Column\ B}$, unless one or more programs used random sampling. If random sampling was used, see Appendix C of the NRS Survey Guidelines for further instructions on reporting. In Column F, the number should be equal to or less than the number in Column D.

Column G is the number in Column F divided by the number in Column D. Column G should never be greater than 100 percent. If the response rate is less than 50 percent (Column E), then the percent reported in Column G is not considered valid. OMB Number 1830-0027, Expires 8/31/14.